

# ALASKA DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND GAME

## DIVISION OF COMMERCIAL FISHERIES

### NEWS RELEASE



*Cora Campbell, Commissioner*  
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### NORTON SOUND COMMERCIAL SALMON OPENINGS

There will be commercial salmon openings directed on coho salmon beginning Sunday, August 4 in Norton Sound Subdistricts 2–6, the Golovin, Elim, Norton Bay, Shaktoolik, and Unalakleet Subdistricts. Commercial permit holders in all subdistricts are limited to 100 fathoms of net and gillnets must have a mesh size of 6 inches or less. Commercial fishing opening times for each subdistrict are as follows:

Subdistricts 2 and 3, the Golovin and Elim Subdistricts, will reopen to commercial salmon fishing for 36 hours from 12:00 noon Monday, August 5 to 12:00 midnight Tuesday evening, August 6. Elim permit holders are reminded that the entire Elim Subdistrict will be open to commercial salmon fishing during scheduled openings until further notice. Elim Subdistrict encompasses all waters from Carson Creek eastward to Isaac's Point.

Subdistrict 4, the Norton Bay Subdistrict, will reopen to commercial salmon fishing for 48 hours from 6:00 p.m. Monday, August 5 to 6:00 p.m. Wednesday, August 7.

Also, effective 6:00 p.m. Sunday, August 4, Subdistricts 5 and 6, the Shaktoolik and Unalakleet Subdistricts, will reopen to a commercial salmon fishing schedule of two 48-hour periods per week until further notice. Periods will be from 6:00 p.m. Sundays to 6:00 p.m. Tuesdays and from 6:00 p.m. Wednesdays to 6:00 p.m. Fridays.

The August 1<sup>st</sup> opening catch of 527 coho salmon in Golovin Subdistrict by 7 permit holders was 92% above the long-term average catch of 274 coho salmon for the first week of August. In the Elim Subdistrict, 12 permit holders caught 437 cohos in 24 hours, which was average for the first week of August. There have been 627 coho salmon enumerated at the Kwiniuk River as of midnight August 2, which is 21% below the 2008–2012 average count of 797 cohos for August 2. However, projected escapement estimates of coho salmon based on this count range from 3,800–6,600 coho salmon for the season for runs with early and normal migration timing, respectively. Thus, the latest catch statistics and escapement information indicate that abundance of coho salmon will be sufficient to achieve escapement needs and provide for inriver subsistence uses of coho salmon. Escapements and catch statistics will be evaluated from this 36-hour opening to determine if additional fishing or periods of longer duration can be allowed without jeopardizing escapement or subsistence needs. Escapement of coho salmon to Subdistricts 2 and 3 will be evaluated using tower counts at the Kwiniuk River and the Kwiniuk River aerial survey goal range of 650–1,300 fish. Aerial surveys will also be flown of the Niukluk River tributary in the Fish River drainage.

Shaktoolik and Unalakleet commercial catches during the most recent 48-hour opening were 40–47% below long-term average catches of coho salmon. However, the coho salmon run to southern Norton Sound appears to be just beginning because chum salmon still outnumbered coho salmon catches in both subdistricts during the July 31<sup>st</sup> opening. Additionally, escapement to the North River tributary is at 1,542 coho salmon as of August 2. Drainagewide escapement projections based on the North River tower count and historical radiotelemetry data range from 38,000–54,000 coho salmon for runs with early and normal migration timing. More importantly, this level of inriver abundance will be more than sufficient to achieve the North River aerial survey goal range of 550–1,100 fish and provide for inriver subsistence and sport fish harvest needs. Shaktoolik and Unalakleet Subdistricts will remain on this schedule for the remainder of the season unless projections decrease dramatically and reductions in fishing time are needed to ensure that subsistence harvest needs will not be jeopardized by commercial fishing.